

We all know that the full realization of equality, freedom, civil rights, voting rights, and equal justice under law has been a long, sometimes faltering, journey fraught with dead ends, deep divides, and seemingly insurmountable obstacles on the road to a more perfect Union. It has been a journey of starts and stops, with harrowing moments—some horrific, some heart-wrenching, but all equally historic, all part of the American saga, each forever etched in the collective memory of this Nation.

The magnificent building in which we do our work today is a monument to that journey. Those who labored to raise this glorious building in tribute to American democracy were themselves slaves. They laid the foundation. They cut the stones. They raised the walls and built the magnificent dome of the U.S. Capitol. Those slaves lived here on Capitol Hill in the shadow of what is now the Statue of Freedom that looks eastward toward the rising Sun and what was then the new dawn of a rising nation.

They are, in many ways, the ancestors of Freedom herself, the precursors of an event to which we have so boldly stood witness in January, in the shadow of their labors, as a Black man raised his hand on the west front of the Capitol to take the oath of office as President of the United States. What greater tribute to them.

We may have come a long way since they built this monument to democracy, but every day, with every troubling racial incident we see on television or read about in blogs or in newspapers, it is clear the century-long work of the NAACP goes on, the work continues. But it is equally clear, with Barack Obama in the White House, we have come of age, united by a common history, tragic at times, fought on the bloody battlefields of a civil war and still being waged in the hearts of the intolerant and unenlightened among us.

Let the images of history tell the story of America plainly, honestly, for what it is—from the labors of those slaves who built this Capitol to the founding of the NAACP; from the battlefields of Gettysburg and Manassas to the freedom rides and marches through Selma and Montgomery; from bloodshed, tragedy and travails, sacrifices and sorrows from those who lived and died on plantations or rode the Underground Railroad north, to those freed by the Emancipation Proclamation; from the devastating inhumanity of slavery to the election of Barack Obama.

There are countless images of courage and heroism, humiliation and humility, honor and horror, dignity and indignity; images of hope and despair, fear and frustration; images of fire hoses and police dogs turned on Americans whose only crime was the longing to be free and equal; images still clear in our minds, triumphant images of Martin Luther King at the Lincoln Memorial, millions marching on Wash-

ington; deeply moving images of peace-loving men like Congressman John Lewis beaten down by billy clubs because he simply wanted to cross a bridge; images of abject poverty, of two worlds separate and apart and far from equal; tragic images of a great man lying in a pool of blood on a motel balcony in Atlanta in April of 1968. But none so powerful, none so deeply moving as Barack Obama taking the oath of office as President of the United States on the west front of the Capitol 41 years later.

These are the awesome images of the history of race since the founding of the NAACP. They represent the history of America as much as they represent the history of the NAACP, and we must—all of us, Black and White alike—embrace them, understand them, and learn from them; learn from the tragedy and the sorrow; learn from the long, hard-fought battle that was the civil rights movement; learn from the debate on this floor that eventually led to the Voting Rights Act; learn from the pro-segregationist terrorism that led to the assassination of NAACP Mississippi field secretary Medgar Evers and the death of Dr. King. Today, all of these images, the good as well as the bad, remain part of who we are, part of the American story in which the NAACP has played a pivotal role.

But the Nation has changed, and so the mission of the NAACP has evolved from what it was 100 years ago. The violence has lessened, but the virus of racism and prejudice has mutated, as all viruses do.

Now too often, intolerance rears its ugly head with the mere mention of the word “immigration.” And when it does, let us be comforted by the knowledge that the NAACP is still there, still working, still fighting the good fight.

Today, the NAACP is an expanded organization dedicated to the elimination of all race prejudice in America, whether that prejudice be against Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and all Americans who seek political, educational, economic, and social equality. For 100 years, the goal of the NAACP has been to tear down the walls of racial discrimination through the democratic process and make tolerance and equality a reality for all of us. Let that goal be realized in our generation, in our time, and let us continue—one nation, indivisible—on that long journey to a more perfect Union.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

#### AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2010

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now proceed to the consideration of H.R. 2997, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2997) making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food

and Drug Administration, and Related Agency programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2010, and for other purposes.

AMENDMENT NO. 1908

(Purpose: In the nature of a substitute.)

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I call up the substitute amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Wisconsin [Mr. KOHL], for himself and Mr. BROWNBACK, proposes an amendment numbered 1908.

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under “Text of Amendments.”)

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following staff have unlimited floor privileges during the consideration of the fiscal year 2010 Agriculture appropriations bill: Galen Fountain, Jessica Frederick, Dianne Nellor, Fitzhugh Elder, Stacy McBride, Phil Karsting, and Riley Scott.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KOHL. I ask unanimous consent that Bob Ross, a detailee from the Department of Agriculture to the Committee on Appropriations, and Katie Toskey, an intern on the Committee on Appropriations, be granted unlimited floor privileges during consideration of the Agriculture appropriations bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the fiscal Year 2010 appropriations bill for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Food and Drug Administration and related agencies. This bill was unanimously reported out of Committee on July 7, and I believe it is a well-balanced bill that deserves the support of all Senators.

This bill includes total spending of \$124 billion. Of that total, \$101 billion is for mandatory programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as Food Stamps, which is funded at \$61 billion, and the Child Nutrition Programs, which are funded at \$17 billion.

Discretionary spending totals \$23 billion, an increase of \$2.3 billion, and is within our 302(b) allocation. While this is a significant increase from last year, the President's request in just four areas—WIC, food and drug safety, humanitarian food assistance, and rural rental assistance—account for nearly 90 percent of the total increase. The depth and breadth of the responsibilities held by the USDA and FDA are far greater than I believe most Americans realize.

The funds in this bill are used to help ensure the most basic of human needs are met. This bill provides the funds for the two major agencies charged with keeping America's food and medical supply safe, something we nearly

always take for granted. It provides funds to ensure that low-income families in rural America have access to affordable housing and opportunities for homeownership. It provides funds to ensure that over 11 million kids receive breakfast and 31 million kids receive lunch at school every day. It provides funds to make sure 2 million kids from low-income families receive a nutritious meal during the summer when their parents are not home. It provides funds to developing countries to provide meals to children when they go to school—which is often the only way to get them there. USDA is also responsible for important agricultural research, conservation activities, community development, animal and plant health activities, agricultural trade, and much more. It is an important bill—more important than many may realize.

There are many specific high notes to mention.

Of the total funding provided in this bill, 69 percent is directed to nutrition programs. The WIC program is funded at more than \$7 billion, which is an increase of almost \$700 million over last year's appropriations bill. This is the amount necessary to meet the increasing need for this program, and will provide nutritious food to nearly 9.8 million low-income mothers and children each month. There is also language included to ensure that military families are not disqualified from the WIC Program because of increased combat pay—this is a small provision, but an important one in recognizing the sacrifices that our soldiers and their families make.

This bill includes \$163 million for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, which provides supplemental food to nearly 450,000 very low-income senior citizens and more than 30,000 low-income women and children. The Emergency Food Assistance Program, which provides free food to food banks, many of which have seen private donations decrease significantly, will receive \$253 million in fiscal year 2010. An additional \$7 million is provided to assist food banks in maintaining and upgrading their facilities and equipment so they can continue to serve those in need. In difficult economic times, these programs are vital to those that might otherwise go hungry.

In the area of food and drug safety, this bill provides the full budget request for both the Food Safety and Inspection Service and the Food and Drug Administration. The FDA is provided \$2.3 billion, an increase of nearly \$300 million. This increase, one of the largest in FDA's history, is necessary to continue the slow turnaround of an ailing organization whose responsibilities have vastly outgrown its funding over the past several years. The FDA is in charge of ensuring the safety of one-quarter of consumer products, and it is imperative that it has the funding to carry out its responsibilities. Similarly, the Food Safety and Inspection

Service is responsible for ensuring that all of the Nation's meat and poultry is safe to eat. FSIS is provided the full budget request of more than \$1 billion to carry out its mission.

This bill provides substantial funding to support international humanitarian food assistance. The PL 480, Food for Peace, and McGovern-Dole programs are funded at the President's request, which together is an increase of more than \$500 million above last year. These programs are vital to helping relieve hunger in some of the most distressed parts of the world and to encourage children in developing countries to receive an education. To enhance those programs, funding is provided to support the use of micro-nutrient fortified foods and to develop new food aid products that can make a real difference in saving lives and securing long-term health benefits, especially for children. The bill also provides \$13 million, as requested by the President, for USDA to help develop agricultural systems in countries facing severe food shortages. We believe that the development of sustainable food systems is the proper alternative to emergency food assistance. Therefore, this bill provides guidance and support for USDA, in partnership with the country's land grant institutions, PVOs, and others, to work together toward global food security.

America's farmers and ranchers face some of the tightest credit conditions they have faced in years. Agricultural producers are having difficulty obtaining capital necessary to maintain operations, and demands for Federal credit have skyrocketed. This bill provides over \$4 billion of needed credit, representing an increase of nearly \$750 million over 2009. These funds will help sustain agricultural producers as private credit markets stabilize.

This bill also provides increased funding for development of rural America, including housing, essential community facilities, business assistance, and infrastructure. In response to the recent housing crisis, USDA rural housing programs remain among the most important, and the most active, for Americans to achieve home ownership. Over \$13 billion is available for housing loans and grants, including funds for new construction, repair and rehabilitation, and housing vouchers and rental assistance to ensure shelter for the lowest income rural residents. Almost \$1.6 billion is available for loans and grants to small towns to support clean water and sanitary waste disposal systems that are essential for thriving communities.

Agricultural research agencies receive a total of \$2.5 billion in the bill, an increase of nearly \$130 million, not counting research funding provided in the 2008 farm bill. The Agricultural Research Service is USDA's premier in-house research agency. Funding is provided in this bill for ARS scientists to conduct increased research on bio-energy; improved livestock and crop

production; human nutrition, including the prevention of childhood obesity; and the reduction of world hunger, among other issues. USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, NIFA, formerly the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, CSREES, funds research, education and extension projects at universities and other partners throughout the country. As part of NIFA, the bill includes an increase of more than \$94 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative that awards competitive research grants throughout the Nation. These programs allow USDA the flexibility to adapt to meet changing research needs and to work with leading researchers throughout the country.

This bill makes substantial investments to protect the Nation's animal and plant resources from diseases and pests. Almost \$40 million is provided to combat the emerald ash borer which has been found in thirteen states and threatens hardwood forests. Over \$30 million is available to fight the Asian long horned beetle, and almost \$46 million is provided to support the citrus health response program to combat citrus greening.

In all, this bill provides a proper balance among all the agencies funded and sets the proper priorities. Conservation, food and drug safety, farm programs, rural development, renewable energy, nutrition, trade, and the day-to-day functions of USDA and FDA are provided adequate funding and proper guidance. The programs funded by this bill touch the lives of every American numerous times each day, and impact the lives of people living on the other side of the world. These are important programs, and I urge each Senator to support this bill.

Mr. President, I would also like to recognize and thank my ranking member, Senator BROWNBACK, for his counsel and support in putting together this bill, and look forward at this time to his opening statement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I wish to first thank my colleague for the work he has done on this bill. Senator KOHL and his staff have done an excellent job in putting together a responsible, good, and important bill, and I am delighted to be a part of it and a part of the process. It has been a great group to work with.

The Appropriations Committee, unlike a lot of other committees in the Congress, most of the time has to work in a bipartisan fashion, and that is a good thing. Senator KOHL and his staff have been very good for us to work with, and I think because of that we have what I believe is a solid bill and one for which we are going to be able to get strong and broad support.

Mr. President, this is the first time the agriculture appropriations bill has been on the floor of the Senate for a number of years. I think that is too

bad, but I think it is also good we are finally getting it here. The 2006 Ag appropriations bill was the last Ag appropriations bill to be on the floor of the Senate. I think it is a good development that it is here, that it will be pending. I think it also bodes well for us to be able to consider this as a separate and stand-alone bill in the final process so we don't have to put it together with a whole bunch of other appropriations bills, which, to me, is the way the process should work. It is a good way to work, and it is my hope we will be able to have a separate agriculture appropriations bill that will make it the whole way through the process.

I look forward to the debate, and I wish to encourage Members now, this evening, to come to the floor and offer amendments so we can consider this expeditiously but fully. I understand from the majority leader that we want to consider a travel and tourism bill and then the Sotomayor vote and consideration next week. I hope we could get through this bill in an expeditious manner so we could get to the Sotomayor discussion; I believe most of our colleagues will want to speak about Judge Sotomayor being considered for the Supreme Court. Whether you are for or against her, people want to be heard. To have as much time as possible for that next week, it will be important we be expeditious on this Ag appropriations bill.

Overall, the budget for food aid in the bill has increased to levels that will allow us to depend less on emergency supplemental appropriations bills that are not scored, and I think it is important we have a regular scoring process and not just do this on an emergency basis. I think that is an important improvement in this bill. By funding food aid at historical levels in the regular appropriations process, USDA and USAID will have more certainty about program resources so they can make better decisions about which situations they are able and need to commit food to.

A number of my colleagues have been to refugee camps in different parts of the world, and they have seen this food in action. It is important and it saves people's lives, and these are important food aid programs.

While I believe this is a valuable step, I am even more encouraged by the creation of two pilot programs that we have initiated in this bill. The chairman has worked on it and we have worked on it in our office. Specifically, in the area of food aid, we have created two pilot programs. The first is a nutrition fortification pilot program to develop and field test new and improved micronutrient fortified food products designed to meet the energy and nutritional needs of school-aged children, pregnant women, nursing mothers, infants, and children under 5 who are served by the McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program.

This is a program where we supply food to a number of very difficult situ-

ations in countries with poor economies around the world that is given as a school lunch. So it draws students in to go to school, and then it is a lunch for them. It has been a very successful program in both getting nutritional requirements met for children and in getting the educational needs met.

What we are talking about in this pilot program is a narrower section of it where a number of scientists around the world have said the most important thing we could fund—that any country actually could fund—to improve the health of the most people would be micronutrients in the Third World and developing countries that are having difficulty, so the children develop their mental capacity, better eyesight, and their overall health capacity.

This is a relatively low-cost, high-yield, high-benefit program. It saves lives, makes lives more productive, and it makes the United States a lot more popular around the world when we are helping people and saving lives. That is one of the pilot programs.

The second is a new food aid product development pilot program. It has been nearly 30 years since the last type of food aid was developed. Thirty years ago, we developed a corn soy blend that is used in many refugee camps and in difficult situations for individuals around the world who can't get enough food. Thirty years ago, we developed an innovative product called corn soy blend, but nutritional understanding has changed in that period of time. What we are looking at is a new wave of food aid products and can we do it better. That is in this pilot program.

A number of people working on AIDS around the world, PEPFAR funding particularly in Africa, are saying the big problem with AIDS recipients is they are getting the antiretroviral drugs, and they are using those, but their body is weakened because they do not have their nutritional needs being met. This is to target in on what can we do to make sure those vulnerable populations are getting the nutritional needs they have.

I am excited about this because I think these are the sorts of things we can do that don't cost much. Indeed, my view would be that we don't, in the future, add to the food aid program but we make it a higher nutrient program and we target it in better ways so we can get more out of this. That is the way we should be working.

If young children have access to proper nutrition, the benefits will follow them the rest of their lives. We all know that. That is what we are trying to do with these pilot programs.

Finally, the bill requires the USDA and USAID to scrutinize how the food aid programs function without seeking to change the basic structure of the Food for Peace or McGovern-Dole Food Aid. We will use the data the Secretary and the administrator provide to the subcommittee to make sure these programs are operating as effectively as possible.

I would have preferred a hard upper limit on transportation costs myself, but I recognize there are many strongly held opinions on this matter. My hope is that all parties can agree we should strive to make these programs more efficient because greater efficiency means more people will be fed.

I have cited, for several of my colleagues, an area of great concern to me, in that 60 percent of our food aid dollar presently goes for transportation or administration. Over a majority of it goes for transportation and administration. It seems to me we ought to be able to get that to a tighter position. We have worked with the chairman on this. Everybody is concerned that we try to stretch our food aid dollars and get as much food to starving people as possible.

I greatly appreciate the courtesies Chairman KOHL and his staff have shown me in my first year as ranking member. Chairman KOHL has been at this for several years and he has done a very good job.

Specifically, I thank Galen Fountain, Jessica Frederick, Dianne Nellor, and Bob Ross for their efforts on this bill and the consideration they have shown my staff. I look forward to working through the process on the floor and moving to conference.

I would urge my colleagues, again, to start getting their amendments pending because I think the more expeditious we can be, the more time we will have to consider the amendments and then also to get to the nomination of Judge Sotomayor, which I anticipate most of the body will want to speak on, and that is going to take a long time to get through.

It is a good bill, and I am looking forward to us working through the amendments to make it a better bill through the process.

I yield the floor.

AMENDMENT NO. 2230 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1908

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk on behalf of Senator TESTER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Wisconsin [Mr. KOHL], for Mr. TESTER, for himself, Mr. ENZI, and Mrs. MCCASKILL, proposes an amendment numbered 2230 to amendment No. 1908.

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To clarify a provision relating to funding for a National Animal Identification Program)

On page 17, beginning on line 17, strike “\$14,607,000” and all that follows through “program” on line 18 and insert the following: “\$7,300,000 shall be for a National Animal Identification program and may only be used for ongoing activities and purposes (as of the date of enactment of this Act) relating to proposed rulemaking for that program under subchapter II of chapter 5, and

chapter 7, of title 5, United States Code (commonly known as the 'Administrative Procedure Act')'.

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KOHL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for 12 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I met in my office today with Donna, a Rhode Islander who suffers from vascular disease. Donna's condition forced her to give up her job, and therefore her insurance. She cannot afford to buy it on her own, since it would cost her \$650 a month—money she does not have. So she pays for her medications out of pocket. They should be \$2,000 per month, but her doctor got them down to \$450. But even this is no walk in the park. Donna read me a laundry list of procedures and services she needs but cannot afford, so like so many Americans, she sits waiting, struggling, hoping she does not get worse.

I want to tell my colleagues what I told Donna today: the Affordable Health Choices Act, the bill that the HELP Committee passed out last Wednesday, would mean hope and change and help for Donna. It would mean that insurance companies could not deny her a policy because of her vascular disease, as they can, and do, right now. It would mean that insurance companies could not charge her sky-high rates because of her vascular disease, as they can, and do, right now. It would mean that if Donna needed financial help to purchase a health insurance plan, she would get it. No pre-existing condition exclusions, affordable premium rates, and subsidies for

those who need help purchasing a plan. That is what the HELP Committee's plan offers every American in this country.

I also have heard from Madeleine, a Pawtucket resident who cannot afford health coverage despite working two jobs. Her family has a history of colorectal cancer; both her sister and mother lost their fight to this disease. Tragically, Madeleine cannot afford to get a colonoscopy. Without insurance, Madeleine waits and hopes that she doesn't get sick, because that is the only option she has.

Under the Affordable Health Choices Act, Madeleine would have the financial help she needs to buy a comprehensive, affordable plan. But even before she did that, even before everything is in place for Madeline to go to a gateway and buy a plan, she could sign up for the Right Choices program. Under Right Choices, even without insurance, Madeline would have access to all basic preventive services. She would get a chronic disease health risk assessment, a care plan, and referrals to community-based resources. Most importantly, she would get the colonoscopy she needs, so that she is not another victim of the terrible disease that took her mother and her sister. It goes without saying that preventing this disease and treating it early would, in the long run, save money for the healthcare system as well as preserve Madeleine's health.

I recently had coffee with Shirley, a Middletown resident who described her relief at turning 65. For the past 20 years, she and her husband did not have insurance. As self-employed business owners in their fifties, finding affordable insurance options was impossible, so they went without. They took their chances. Now 65 and eligible for Medicare, they finally have peace of mind. Shirley admits she and her husband were lucky to make it through those 20 years without serious health problems. During our meeting, she urged us to pass health care reform for the millions of hard-working Americans—hard-working, middle-class Americans—who are not as fortunate as she and her husband.

Under the bill passed by the HELP Committee, Shirley would not have endured 20 years of fear and uncertainty without health insurance. As a self-employed, small business owner, Shirley would be eligible for tax credits to either continue to offer health insurance to her employees, or to offer it for the first time. Shirley could also take all of her employees to the health insurance gateway, which will give small firms a choice of multiple insurance plans at a lower cost and of a higher quality than what currently exist in the small group market. If you are a small business owner, this bill is for you.

Judith from Warwick, has shared with me a story about her brother-in-law, whose lungs collapsed during an outpatient procedure. After staying in

the intensive care unit for 28 days, he contracted a hospital infection and was rehospitalized four times. Thankfully, a year later, he is symptom free. However, the costs stemming from the treatment totaled over \$500,000. Like her brother-in-law, Judith and her husband are retired and live off of their monthly Social Security check. She reflects that on such a limited income, if she or her husband faced a catastrophic health issue like her brother-in-law, they would be in "dire straits."

The HELP Committee bill creates a Patient Safety Research Center at AHRQ, which will support research, technical assistance, and process implementation grants to local providers to teach and implement best practices. No one should go through what Judith's brother-in-law did. No one should contract a hospital infection that leads to not one, not two, not three, but four rehospitalizations. We know how to prevent hospital-acquired infections; we have seen tremendous results in places like Michigan and Rhode Island for years. The HELP Committee bill finally creates a national infrastructure to support the dissemination of these proven techniques so that we can drastically improve the quality of care in our system, and in doing so, drastically lower the cost.

Finally, I recently met David, a self-employed resident from Central Falls, who described the astronomical rise in the cost of health insurance for him and his wife. Years ago, he paid \$85 per month for their plan; today, he pays approximately \$19,000 a year for their health insurance. Despite the dramatic jump in price, their health insurance plan does not cover as much as it used to. To keep their premiums and overall health costs down, David has been forced to drop dental coverage and increase the out-of-pocket expenses he and his wife pay on their plan. He noted, "I'm almost afraid to get sick, because today's health plans have so many holes in them, they can nickel and dime you to death."

The Affordable Health Choices Act would do two important things to help David. One, it would require that plans sold in the gateway offer a truly comprehensive set of benefits so that "affordable" does not mean "skimpy." Affordable will mean inclusive, available, and accessible. Two, the bill would not allow insurance companies to "nickel and dime you to death" as David fears now. Insurance companies would be prohibited from imposing lifetime or annual limits on the dollar value of benefits for any enrollee. So David will not be forced to pay out-of-pocket once he exceeds certain levels of benefits, as he does now.

There is some uncertainty both in this building and around this country right now about the future of health reform. I want to remind everyone—my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, my colleagues in the House, Rhode Islanders back home, and Americans